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Occupational Employment and Wages in Hickory-Lenoir-Morganton – May 2017

Workers in the Hickory-Lenoir-Morganton Metropolitan Statistical Area had an average (mean) hourly wage of \$18.88 in May 2017, about 22 percent below the nationwide average of \$24.34, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Regional Commissioner Janet S. Rankin noted that, after testing for statistical significance, 21 groups had significantly lower wages than their respective national averages, including legal; computer and mathematical; and construction and extraction.

When compared to the nationwide distribution, local employment was more highly concentrated in 5 of the 22 occupational groups, including production; transportation and material moving; and healthcare support. Conversely, 14 groups had employment shares significantly below their national representation, including business and financial operations; office and administrative support; and computer and mathematical. (See [table A](#) and [box note](#) at end of release.)

Table A. Occupational employment and wages by major occupational group, United States and the Hickory-Lenoir-Morganton Metropolitan Statistical Area, and measures of statistical significance, May 2017

Major occupational group	Percent of total employment		Mean hourly wage		
	United States	Hickory	United States	Hickory	Percent difference ⁽¹⁾
Total, all occupations	100.0	100.0	\$24.34	\$18.88*	-22
Management	5.1	3.1*	57.65	52.46*	-9
Business and financial operations	5.2	2.3*	36.70	30.19*	-18
Computer and mathematical	3.0	0.7*	43.18	30.98*	-28
Architecture and engineering	1.8	1.0*	41.44	32.56*	-21
Life, physical, and social science	0.8	0.3*	35.76	25.37*	-29
Community and social service	1.5	1.3*	23.10	20.80*	-10
Legal	0.8	(2)	51.62	29.13*	-44
Education, training, and library	6.1	5.0*	26.67	20.00*	-25
Arts, design, entertainment, sports, and media	1.4	0.6*	28.34	21.85*	-23
Healthcare practitioners and technical	6.0	6.2*	38.83	35.00*	-10
Healthcare support	2.9	5.2*	15.05	13.32*	-11
Protective service	2.4	2.2*	22.69	16.34*	-28
Food preparation and serving related	9.3	8.4*	11.88	10.25*	-14
Building and grounds cleaning and maintenance	3.1	2.0*	13.91	12.00*	-14
Personal care and service	3.6	2.2*	13.11	11.68*	-11
Sales and related	10.2	9.9	19.56	16.67*	-15
Office and administrative support	15.4	12.9*	18.24	15.99*	-12
Farming, fishing, and forestry	0.3	(2)	13.87	(2)	-
Construction and extraction	4.0	2.0*	24.01	18.24*	-24
Installation, maintenance, and repair	3.9	4.4*	23.02	20.59*	-11
Production	6.3	20.6*	18.30	16.53*	-10
Transportation and material moving	7.0	9.4*	17.82	15.94*	-11

Note: See footnotes at end of table.

Footnotes:

(1) A positive percent difference measures how much the mean wage in the Hickory-Lenoir-Morganton Metropolitan Statistical Area is above the national mean wage, while a negative difference reflects a lower wage.

(2) Estimate not released

* The percent share of employment or mean hourly wage for this area is significantly different from the national average of all areas at the 90-percent confidence level.

- Data not available.

One occupational group—production—was chosen to illustrate the diversity of data available for any of the 22 major occupational categories. Hickory-Lenoir-Morganton had 31,630 jobs in production occupations, accounting for 20.6 percent of local area employment, significantly higher than the 6.3-percent share nationally. The average hourly wage for this occupational group locally was \$16.53, significantly below the national wage of \$18.30.

Some of the larger detailed occupations within the production group included assemblers and fabricators, all other, including team assemblers (4,110), upholsterers (3,670), and sewing machine operators (2,260). Among the higher paying jobs in this group were power plant operators and first-line supervisors of production and operating workers, with mean hourly wages of \$40.51 and \$26.23, respectively. At the lower end of the wage scale were laundry and dry-cleaning workers (\$10.84) and adhesive bonding machine operators and tenders (\$12.13). (Detailed data for production occupations are presented in [table 1](#); for a complete listing of detailed occupations available, go to www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_25860.htm.)

Location quotients allow us to explore the occupational make-up of a metropolitan area by comparing the composition of jobs in an area relative to the national average. (See [table 1](#).) For example, a location quotient of 2.0 indicates that an occupation accounts for twice the share of employment in the area than it does nationally. In the Hickory-Lenoir-Morganton Metropolitan Statistical Area, above-average concentrations of employment were found in many of the occupations within the production group. For instance, upholsterers were employed at 104.6 times the national rate in Hickory, and hand cutters and trimmers, at 65.4 times the U.S. average. On the other hand, machinists had a location quotient of 1.2 in Hickory, indicating that this particular occupation's local and national employment shares were similar.

These statistics are from the Occupational Employment Statistics (OES) survey, a federal-state cooperative program between BLS and State Workforce Agencies, in this case, the North Carolina Department of Commerce.

Notes on Occupational Employment Statistics Data

With the release of the May 2017 estimates, the OES program has replaced 21 detailed occupations found in the 2010 Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) with 10 new aggregations of those occupations. In addition, selected 4- and 5-digit North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) industries previously published by OES will no longer be published separately. Some of the 4-digit NAICS industries that are no longer being published separately will instead be published as OES-specific industry aggregations. More information about the new occupational and industry aggregations is available at www.bls.gov/oes/changes_2017.htm.

A value that is statistically different from another does not necessarily mean that the difference has economic or practical significance. Statistical significance is concerned with the ability to make confident statements about a universe based on a sample. It is entirely possible that a large difference between two values is not significantly different statistically, while a small difference is, since both the size and heterogeneity of the sample affect the relative error of the data being tested.

Technical Note

The Occupational Employment Statistics (OES) survey is a semiannual mail survey measuring occupational employment and wage rates for wage and salary workers in nonfarm establishments in the United States. The OES data available from BLS include cross-industry occupational employment and wage estimates for the nation; over 650 areas, including states and the District of Columbia, metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs), metropolitan divisions, nonmetropolitan areas, and territories; national industry-specific estimates at the NAICS sector, 3-, 4-, and selected 5- and 6-digit industry levels; and national estimates by ownership across all industries and for schools and hospitals. OES data are available at www.bls.gov/oes/tables.htm.

OES estimates are constructed from a sample of about 1.2 million establishments. Each year, two semiannual panels of approximately 200,000 sampled establishments are contacted, one panel in May and the other in November. Responses are obtained by mail, Internet or other electronic means, email, telephone, or personal visit. The May 2017 estimates are based on responses from six semiannual panels collected over a 3-year period: May 2017, November 2016, May 2016, November 2015, May 2015, and November 2014. The overall national response rate for the six panels, based on the 50 states and the District of Columbia, is 72 percent based on establishments and 68 percent based on weighted sampled employment. The unweighted sample employment of 82 million across all six semiannual panels represents approximately 58 percent of total national employment. The sample in the Hickory-Lenoir-Morganton Metropolitan Statistical Area included 1,695 establishments with a response rate of 87 percent. For more information about OES concepts and methodology, go to www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_tec.htm.

The May 2017 OES estimates are based on the 2010 Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) system and the 2017 North American Industry Classification System (NAICS). Information about the 2010 SOC is available on the BLS website at www.bls.gov/soc and information about the 2017 NAICS is available at www.bls.gov/bls/naics.htm.

Metropolitan area definitions

The substate area data published in this release reflect the standards and definitions established by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget.

The **Hickory-Lenoir-Morganton Metropolitan Statistical Area** includes Alexander, Burke, Caldwell, and Catawba Counties in North Carolina.

Additional information

OES data are available on our regional web page at www.bls.gov/regions/southeast. Answers to frequently asked questions about the OES data are available at www.bls.gov/oes/oes_ques.htm. Detailed technical information about the OES survey is available in our Survey Methods and Reliability Statement on the BLS website at www.bls.gov/oes/current/methods_statement.pdf.

Information in this release will be made available to sensory impaired individuals upon request. Voice phone: (202) 691-5200; Federal Relay Service: (800) 877-8339.

Table 1. Employment and wage data from the Occupational Employment Statistics survey, by occupation, Hickory-Lenoir-Morganton Metropolitan Statistical Area, May 2017

Occupation ⁽¹⁾	Employment		Mean wages	
	Level ⁽²⁾	Location quotient ⁽³⁾	Hourly	Annual ⁽⁴⁾
Production occupations	31,630	3.3	\$16.53	\$34,370
First-line supervisors of production and operating workers	1,930	2.9	26.23	54,560
Electrical, electronic, and electromechanical assemblers, except coil winders, tapers, and finishers	290	1.0	15.63	32,510
Structural metal fabricators and fitters	40	0.5	17.55	36,490
Assemblers and fabricators, all other, including team assemblers	4,110	2.9	13.10	27,240
Bakers	180	0.9	19.93	41,460
Butchers and meat cutters	120	0.9	14.90	30,980
Computer-controlled machine tool operators, metal and plastic	290	1.9	16.74	34,820
Computer numerically controlled machine tool programmers, metal and plastic	70	2.7	17.76	36,930
Extruding and drawing machine setters, operators, and tenders, metal and plastic	1,030	13.0	21.50	44,710
Cutting, punching, and press machine setters, operators, and tenders, metal and plastic	500	2.4	12.69	26,400
Grinding, lapping, polishing, and buffing machine tool setters, operators, and tenders, metal and plastic	130	1.6	17.22	35,810
Lathe and turning machine tool setters, operators, and tenders, metal and plastic	80	2.6	20.07	41,750
Milling and planing machine setters, operators, and tenders, metal and plastic	(5)	(5)	19.75	41,080
Machinists	490	1.2	19.69	40,960
Molding, coremaking, and casting machine setters, operators, and tenders, metal and plastic	590	3.5	14.56	30,280
Tool and die makers	100	1.3	22.54	46,870
Welders, cutters, solderers, and brazers	540	1.3	16.19	33,670
Heat treating equipment setters, operators, and tenders, metal and plastic	60	2.7	17.83	37,080
Prepress technicians and workers	40	1.1	19.36	40,260
Printing press operators	380	2.1	17.37	36,130
Print binding and finishing workers	30	0.6	11.90	24,750
Laundry and dry-cleaning workers	340	1.5	10.84	22,550
Sewing machine operators	2,260	15.3	15.96	33,200
Textile bleaching and dyeing machine operators and tenders	410	39.0	14.30	29,740
Textile cutting machine setters, operators, and tenders ..	420	27.5	18.07	37,580
Textile knitting and weaving machine setters, operators, and tenders	510	22.5	14.16	29,460
Textile winding, twisting, and drawing out machine setters, operators, and tenders	510	15.4	12.45	25,900
Extruding and forming machine setters, operators, and tenders, synthetic and glass fibers	(5)	(5)	15.42	32,070
Fabric and apparel patternmakers	100	19.7	22.28	46,350
Upholsterers	3,670	104.6	19.88	41,350
Textile, apparel, and furnishings workers, all other	450	28.6	13.23	27,520
Cabinetmakers and bench carpenters	390	3.7	13.63	28,340
Furniture finishers	450	23.7	14.40	29,940
Model makers, wood	30	33.9	21.86	45,480
Sawing machine setters, operators, and tenders, wood ..	270	4.8	14.81	30,810
Woodworking machine setters, operators, and tenders, except sawing	940	10.9	15.43	32,090
Power plant operators	150	4.2	40.51	84,260
Water and wastewater treatment plant and system operators	120	1.0	18.64	38,780
Chemical equipment operators and tenders	60	0.7	16.53	34,380
Separating, filtering, clarifying, precipitating, and still machine setters, operators, and tenders	40	0.7	14.22	29,580

Note: See footnotes at end of table.

Table 1. Employment and wage data from the Occupational Employment Statistics survey, by occupation, Hickory-Lenoir-Morganton Metropolitan Statistical Area, May 2017 - Continued

Occupation ⁽¹⁾	Employment		Mean wages	
	Level ⁽²⁾	Location quotient ⁽³⁾	Hourly	Annual ⁽⁴⁾
Grinding and polishing workers, hand	190	5.7	12.31	25,600
Mixing and blending machine setters, operators, and tenders	290	2.1	14.32	29,780
Cutters and trimmers, hand	860	65.4	17.87	37,160
Cutting and slicing machine setters, operators, and tenders	600	9.2	17.09	35,550
Extruding, forming, pressing, and compacting machine setters, operators, and tenders	230	2.8	14.91	31,010
Furnace, kiln, oven, drier, and kettle operators and tenders	30	1.6	15.38	31,980
Inspectors, testers, sorters, samplers, and weighers	1,600	2.8	15.52	32,290
Dental laboratory technicians	80	2.2	15.91	33,100
Packaging and filling machine operators and tenders	900	2.1	13.75	28,600
Coating, painting, and spraying machine setters, operators, and tenders	380	4.0	14.27	29,690
Painters, transportation equipment	(5)	(5)	21.98	45,720
Painting, coating, and decorating workers	40	3.1	15.48	32,190
Photographic process workers and processing machine operators	(5)	(5)	13.15	27,360
Adhesive bonding machine operators and tenders	350	20.3	12.13	25,220
Paper goods machine setters, operators, and tenders ...	380	3.7	17.35	36,080
Tire builders	50	2.0	12.05	25,060
Helpers--production workers	1,270	2.9	14.14	29,410
Production workers, all other	210	0.8	15.82	32,900

Footnotes:

(1) For a complete listing of all detailed occupations in the Hickory-Lenoir-Morganton Metropolitan Statistical Area, see www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_25860.htm

(2) Estimates for detailed occupations do not sum to the totals because the totals include occupations not shown separately. Estimates do not include self-employed workers.

(3) The location quotient is the ratio of the area concentration of occupational employment to the national average concentration. A location quotient greater than one indicates the occupation has a higher share of employment than average, and a location quotient less than one indicates the occupation is less prevalent in the area than average.

(4) Annual wages have been calculated by multiplying the hourly mean wage by a "year-round, full-time" hours figure of 2,080 hours; for those occupations where there is not an hourly mean wage published, the annual wage has been directly calculated from the reported survey data.

(5) Estimate not released.